4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

also contributed to a reduction in the spread of viruses, particularly as the cattle are generally kept away from these courtyards fronting the houses.

The ecological significance of these various beliefs and practices is that as the Nilgiri population increased in the nineteenth century and some village streams began to be polluted by this new pressure, the Badagas managed to avoid some contamination by switching from drinking stream water and fresh milk to tea, coffee and sometimes alcohol, all of which would be relatively free of bacterial organisms. The new balance with the environment that this change brought about was certainly one factor in the remarkable increase in the Badaga population ever since the advent of the British (Diagram 1).

At the same time that this change in drinking habits was occurring their eating habits were undergoing an equally radical transformation. In part this was due to the several dozen types of fruit, grain and vegetable introduced from Europe by British settlers and adopted by most Badagas (2.1, Table 2; Hockings 1973: 867). The variety of their diet was thus greatly improved. Also the earlier habit of eating a midday meal, often in open air (Harkness 1832: 111), tended to cease as more and more Badaga adults began working for an hourly or daily wage on the plantations and construction projects initiated by the British, and as increasing numbers of children spent the day in school. In the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it thus became usual for Badagas to consume only two meals a day, generally in their own homes, one at sunrise and the other in the evening. The importance of this practice from a hygienic viewpoint was that, because flies are normally active only during daytime, "eating at night or in the early morning may protect food from fly-borne contamination" (Alland 1970: 59). Any change of diet or of custom that tended to reduce the human intake of bacterial organisms was reflected in the greatly increased life expectancy during the past century and a half.

1.8. By the later nineteenth and the twentieth centuries successful exploration of the botanical realm and this steadily increasing Badaga population had, through a process of interaction and by individual experiments, observations of animal browsing, or other acts of discovery about which we can know nothing, developed the third phase in their medical history — the full-fledged therapeutic system described in this book. As an increasingly heavy work-load was

41 Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

252 [674] visiting affine, for otherwise he will conclude that he is not welcome in the house. One should eat with one's relatives: "If eaten with ten people it is milk; if eaten by oneself it is shit." Several proverbs 252 539 suggest that not all affines are to be made welcome, though: "Is it a bad thing for the affine who has become ruined and came [to us to eat] a poor quality of finger millet and sour buttermilk?" The useless housewife is one who is too lazy to cook regularly: "Not caring about her husband's hunger, a bad wife will eat the old food herself [rather than cook]."

Earth-eating

261 2.4. The eating of earths is widespread in South India (Hooper and Mann 1906: 254). We find that the practice has been reported in particular from the part of Mysore whence the Badagas fled in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and that a baked edible clay is even sold in the bazaars there (Thurston 1901: 121; Hooper and Mann 1906: 256). In that part of Mysore the consumption of raw or baked clay was fairly common among women especially, and was said to bring no ill effects. An informant did however state that 261 among chronic earth-eaters "their appearance suggests that they 164 are suffering from pernicious anaemia, the face being unnaturally swollen or puffed and the abdomen distended, while the limbs are shrunk except at the joints, which appear enlarged and are said to be painful" (Thurston 1901: 121). Early medical officers reported on the dire consequences of habitual earth-eating, especially mentioning anaemia and dysentery (Hooper and Mann 1906: 263-70). [165] It has not been possible to discover whether the high death-rate due to dysentery among Badagas (see 9.7) can be attributed in part to this habit. Hooper and Mann (1906: 254) reported the practice as 261 widespread throughout India, and as chiefly confined to labourers [171] and pregnant women, including Badagas. The practice is common amongst them, pregnant women being especially fond of the earth, even though older people abuse them for eating it because they do not think it a foodstuff. The earth, said to have a pleasant taste and smell, is yellowish-brown in colour, and is called *suttekaḷ*. It is actually a weathered feldspar, chemically aluminium silicate, and is the same thing as kaolin. Humans do of course need traces of aluminium 261 in their diet. Dietary deficiency where soils are heavily leached might ● 146 thus explain the practice; as it perhaps does the eating of charcoal

41 Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

by Badaga infants. One would certainly expect pregnant women and plantation labourers to be the people suffering most from mineral deficiencies in their diet. One clay sample from Ootacamund, of the kind that Badagas eat, had the following chemical components (Hooper and Mann 1906: 262):

Loss on ignition—	9.63%
(including nitrogen)	0.23%
Silica	71.66%
Feric oxide	2.71%
Alumina	4.94%
Lime	5.78%
Magnesia	1.54%
Potash	0.88%
Soda	1.01%
Sulphuric acid	0.06%
Phosphoric anhydride	1.79%

Gopi mud was a clay that used to be mixed with water and left to stand in the house. Later the water developed a salty taste and would be used in cooking (Belli Gowder 1923-41: 2).

Liquor

2.5. There is no doubt that the British introduced the Badagas to the demon drink, for their earliest reports on the community make it clear that "Liquors of an intoxicating quality are never distilled on the hills nor drunk by any of the castes" (Macpherson 1820: lix; cf. Ainslie 1834: 36). Yet by 1829 local Englishmen had brewed beer "from malt of Native Manufacture" (Price 1908: 218). By 1847, as we have already mentioned, Ootacamund had become a centre of "widespread and continuous drunkenness amongst low-class natives" (Price 1908: 51). For nearly a century following that date there are occasional complaints in the literature about the drunkenness of Badagas. Even today it is usually possible to see one or two drunken men in any village in the later afternoon, particularly on festival days.

The local liquor industry has fluctuated with repeated attempts to enforce prohibition, both before and after Independence. At the present time prohibition is once again the law. The women rarely

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 33]